A Selection of Poké-Wisdom from the Writers of

DUELIST

Poké-Phenomenon
Where did all these Pocket Monsters come from , anyway?
by Michael G. Ryan

Gotta Train 'em All!
How to become a first-class Pokémon trainer.
by Robert Gutschera

Pokémon Picks & Tricks
With these quick tips, you'll be training monsters like a pro.
by Tom Wylie

Pokémon League News
There is a Pokémon league near you!
by David Noonan

Poké-natomy
How to read a Pokémon card.
by Michael Mikaelian

Pokémon Trading Post
Trade fairly with your friends.
by Glenn Elliott

Starting From Scratch, Double Slap and Poison Stinger
Tips on How to Construct Your Winning Pokémon Deck.
by Michael Mikaelian

A Place in France Where the Pokémon Dance
The Strategy Behind Running Away.
by Robert Gutschera

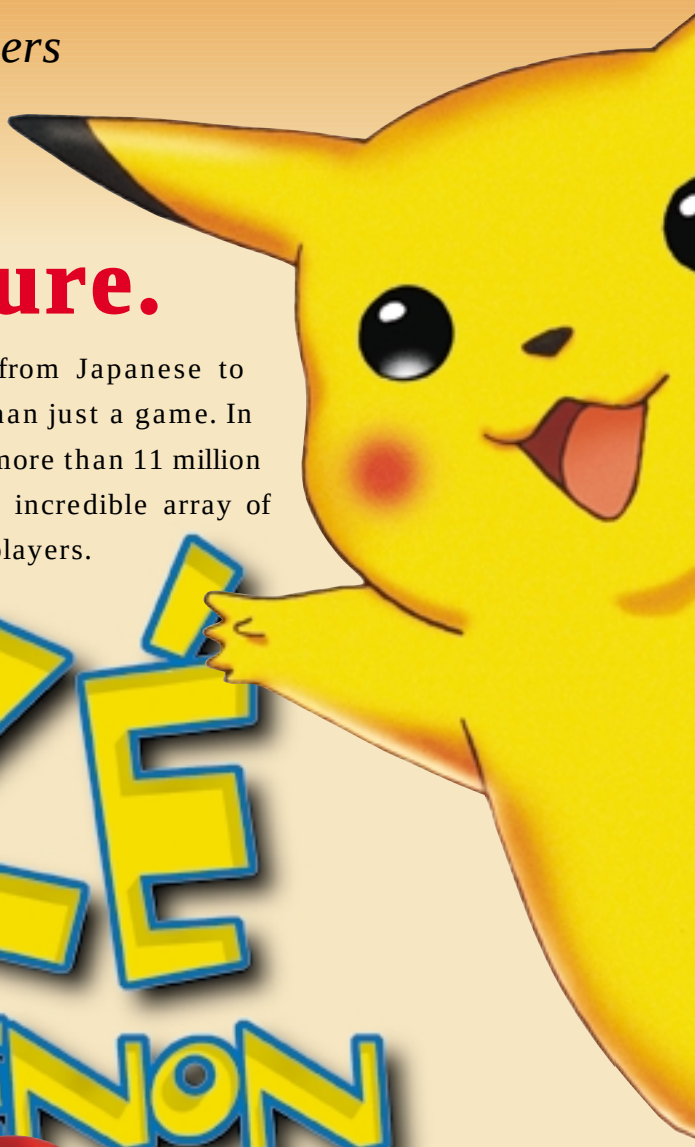
Pokémon Profiles
Learn to use Pokémon Center and Professor Oak with two new decks.
by Will McDermott

Notes and Credits

Pokémon—known as *Pocket Monsters* in Japan, where it all began—is to Japanese kids what Mickey Mouse is to American kids:

a national treasure.

According to Ron Foster, who translates **Pokémon** from Japanese to English for Wizards of the Coast, **Pokémon** is more than just a game. In four years, the electronic Game Boy version has sold more than 11 million units. Training centers—where players can buy an incredible array of **Pokémon** merchandise—are always full of excited players.



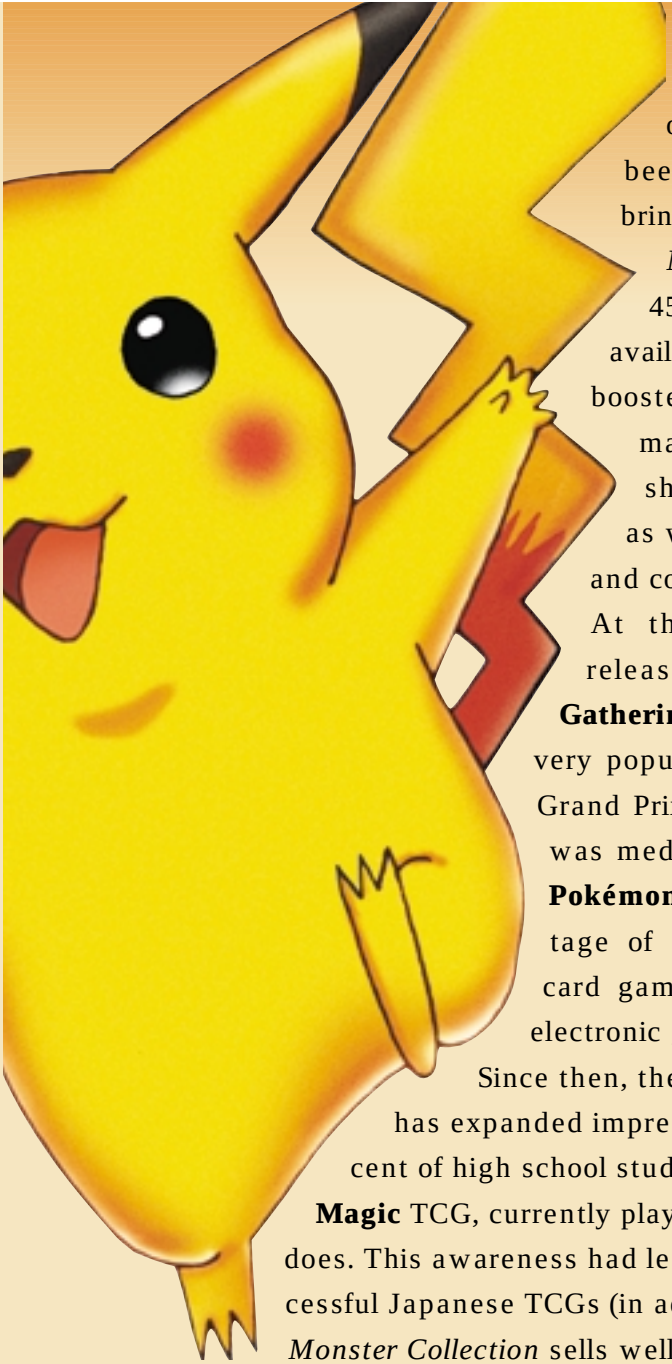
POKÉ PHENOMENON

By Michael G. Ryan

SPECIAL SECTION

Pikachu, easily the most popular character, is everywhere—from towels to backpacks to candy to neckties to commercial jets. "I'm serious," Foster says. "ANA has a **Pokémon** plane that's covered with **Pokémon** characters inside and out." Pikachu, Foster suggests, is as recognizable in Japan as Hello Kitty or Mickey Mouse and has been seen in movies, on a TV show, as dolls, keychains, phones—even underwear. "Pikachu is ubiquitous in Japan," he says.

The *Pocket Monsters* trading card game has only been around since 1997, but in that time it has seen rapid development and matching success. There have been four revisions of the basic set, four expansions, and a separate version (called the *Gym* series) that has its own expansions and is compatible with the basic set and



other cards. There have also been 35 different promo cards, bringing the grand total of *Pocket Monster* cards to more than 450. These cards have been available in starter decks, in booster packs, and in vending machines (where you get a sheet of three peel-off cards as well as damage counters and coins).

At the time of **Pokémon**'s release, the **Magic: The Gathering** trading card game was very popular in Japan. "We'd had a Grand Prix," Foster says, "and there was media coverage of the game. **Pokémon** was able to take advantage of the general popularity of card games as well as that of the electronic game."

Since then, the trading card game market has expanded impressively in Japan. Eighty percent of high school students have either played the **Magic** TCG, currently play it, or know someone who does. This awareness had led to the development of successful Japanese TCGs (in addition to **Pokémon**, the game *Monster Collection* sells well) and the continued growth of more advanced games like **Magic**.

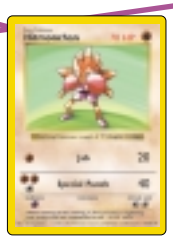
The Elite 8

by Shawn F. Carnes

1. Bulbasaur

Perhaps the most popular Pokémon from the Grass family, **Bulbasaur** packs a pretty mean punch! It starts off with 40 Hit Points (nothing to really shout about) but that's not why it's one of the Prime Eight. Using an attack called Leech Seed (cost [G][C]), it can do 20 damage while regaining 10 Hit Points (if it's taken damage itself). That makes Bulbasaur one of very few Pokémon that can actually heal without using a Potion or Super Potion card. Bulbasaur evolves into the even more exciting Ivysaur and from there into the butt-kickin' Venusaur. Any deck that uses Grass should consider using Bulbasaur—just watch out for Fire Pokémon, as Bulbasaur has a Weakness to Fire. If you're looking for a decent Pokémon that evolves into some frightening forms, Bulbasaur's the one for you. —SFC

2. Hitmonchan



This Fighting Pokémon doesn't play around! **Hitmonchan**'s got 70 Hit Points and does 20 damage with its Jab attack, which only costs [F]. Its second attack, Haymaker, is even more impressive, doing 40 damage for [F][F]! All this action wrapped up into a Basic Pokémon—Hitmonchan doesn't evolve, and it probably doesn't need to! Of course, it's a Hologram card, making it harder to catch, and it has a Weakness to Psychic, so be careful against decks that use Psychic Pokémon. Other than that, if you're looking for a nice Fighting addition to your deck, Hitmonchan is your Pokémon! —SFC

"**Pokémon** actually helps the **Magic** scene," Foster notes. "It introduces young children to TCGs. Eventually, they 'graduate' from **Pokémon** and move on to more complex games, the first and foremost being **Magic**. And while **Magic** is still the most popular TCG in Japan, **Pokémon** is second."

As with the **Magic** TCG, **Pokémon** generates tournaments (including special rules for doubles tournaments where parents can participate), though the age level of the players sometimes prevents the game from becoming too competitive. Foster points out that the real thrill of **Pokémon** is that it allows kids to have "fun with the Pokémon."

And that's the best goal any game—even a phenomenon—can have.

GOTTA TRAIN 'EM ALL!

By
ROBERT GUTSCHERA

Pokémon has a lot in common with games like **Magic**. You play cards from your hand, and some of those cards are creatures—that is, Pokémon—that fight for you. Some cards, like the Pokémon and the *Energy* cards that power up their attacks, you play once and then use turn after turn, but other cards—called *Trainers*—are played once and then discarded after they have their effect.

However, **Pokémon** is different in a number of ways. There are no costs to playing cards; if a card is in your hand, you can just play it. In order to attack, Pokémon need Energy cards attached to them, and the more powerful the attack, the more Energy you'll need attached to that Pokémon for it to use the attack. You only have one Pokémon, called the *Active Pokémon*, fighting at a time (other Pokémon wait on the Bench, ready to join in if the Active Pokémon leaves the fight). Your Active Pokémon fights directly against your opponent's Active Pokémon; you win by *Knocking Out* three of your opponent's Pokémon.

Another thing that separates **Pokémon** from other trading card games is the way your Pokémon evolve into more powerful incarnations. For example, if you have a Pikachu on the table and a Raichu in your hand, you can play the Raichu card on top of the Pikachu card. Raichu has more Hit Points and more powerful attacks than Pikachu, but you can only play Raichu if you already have a Pikachu on the table.

Here's how the first few turns of a **Pokémon** game might go. If you have a starter set, follow along!

Andy and Becky are playing. Andy won the coin toss, so he goes first. In his opening seven-card hand, Andy has Charmander, Charmeleon, four Fire Energy, and a Gust of Wind. Becky has Machop, Rattata, three Fighting Energy, and two Potions. Each player also takes three cards from his or her deck and sets them aside face down (without peeking) as *Prizes*. Whenever a player's Pokémon gets Knocked Out, the other player gets to draw one of his or her Prizes—if you Knock Out three opposing Pokémon and draw your last Prize, you win!

Before the game starts, each player chooses an Active Pokémon and puts it face down. Andy chooses Charmander and Becky chooses Rattata. Then they both flip their cards over and begin.

Andy's first turn: Andy draws a card from his deck and adds it to his hand—it's Ponyta. He attaches a Fire Energy to Charmander. He puts Ponyta down on his Bench so that he'll have a backup Pokémon in case anything happens to Charmander. Then Andy uses Charmander's Scratch attack (the ✸ to the left of the Scratch attack means that Charmander needs one Energy of any color to use Scratch). This does 10 damage to Rattata, so 1 damage counter is put on Rattata (each damage counter represents 10 damage).

Becky's first turn: Becky draws a Fighting Energy. She decides to play Machop onto her Bench and then retreat Rattata, moving it to the Bench and choosing another Pokémon (Machop) to be the Active Pokémon. Normally Becky would have to pay the *Retreat Cost* by discarding from the retreating Pokémon as many Energy cards as there are ✸ symbols on the card's lower right. But Rattata doesn't have any symbols under Retreat Cost, so it retreats

End of Turn One

End of Turn Two

for free. Now Becky attaches a Fighting Energy card to Machop and attacks Charmander with Low Kick for 20 damage.

Andy's second turn: Andy draws a Fire Energy. He attaches it to Charmander. He could use Charmander's Ember attack to do 30 damage by discarding an Energy card, but he decides just to Scratch Machop for 10 damage.

Becky's second turn: Becky draws another Machop. She sees that her current Machop has 10 damage and figures that Charmander's Ember attack can only do 30 damage, so she decides not to play a Potion. Becky simply has Machop Low Kick Charmander for 20 more damage.

Andy's third turn: Andy draws an Energy Retrieval. This isn't much use to him now, but if he runs short of Energy later he'll be glad to have it. Now Andy is ready to give Becky a nasty shock: He attaches an Energy card to Charmander, and then evolves Charmander by playing Charmeleon on top of Charmander! Andy uses Charmeleon's Flamethrower attack (discarding a Fire Energy card from Charmeleon in order to do so) to do 50 damage to Becky's Machop and Knock Out Machop in one mighty blow. Becky brings out Rattata as her new Active Pokémon. Andy gets to take one of his Prizes and add it to his hand (it's a Fire Energy).

Becky's third turn: Becky isn't happy to see Charmeleon, but she draws an Energy Drain! Now she has a plan. She plays Energy Drain on Charmeleon so that it has only one Energy left. She plays her second Machop onto her Bench, attaches a Fighting Energy to it, and retreats Rattata, replacing it with Machop. Machop does a Low Kick, doing 20 damage to Charmeleon.

Andy's fourth turn: Andy draws Growlithe. Charmeleon now has 60 damage, which means that Machop could Knock Out Charmeleon next turn. Andy decides to play Ponyta onto his Bench. He retreats Charmeleon (discarding a Fire Energy card from it in order to pay the Retreat Cost of) and makes Ponyta his Active Pokémon. Then he attaches a Fire Energy card to Ponyta. Ponyta doesn't have enough Energy to attack yet, so Andy ends his turn without attacking.

End of Turn Three

End of Turn Four

End of Turn Five

Becky's fourth turn: Becky draws Diglett. She has Machop use Low Kick to do 20 damage to Ponyta.

Andy's fifth turn: Andy draws another Fire Energy. Andy attaches it to Ponyta. He puts Growlithe on his Bench. Then he plays Gust of Wind to switch Becky's Machop for Rattata and has Ponyta do 30 damage to Rattata, Knocking Out Rattata. (Becky brings Machop back out as her Active Pokémon.) Andy draws another Prize—a Switch!

Becky's fifth turn: Becky draws a Fighting Energy. She decides on another Low Kick, which Knocks Out Ponyta. Andy makes Growlithe his new Active Pokémon. She now gets to draw a Prize, which turns out to be Machoke.

After five turns, Becky has two Prize cards left to draw and Andy only has one, so Andy is ahead. But Becky's Machop is doing 20 damage each turn, and she still has two Potions in her hand in case Machop gets damaged. She has a pretty good chance of defeating Growlithe and tying the game. And if Machop evolves into Machoke, things could get even scarier for Andy. Who will win is anybody's guess!

Making Tradeoffs

When you build a **Pokémon** deck, you can't just throw any old group of cards together and call them winners. If nothing else, you have to make sure you restrict yourself to just one or two types of Pokémon (with maybe some Colorless ones thrown in) and use the right type of Energy. But it's also important that your cards cover for each other's Weaknesses as much as possible. Here's a quick look at how certain cards let you take chances when designing a deck, and how to protect those Weaknesses.

Pokémon Picks & Tricks

By Tom Wylie

4. Koffing

Sometimes a special attack ability makes a Pokémon much more powerful than its peers. Koffing, a Grass Pokémon with 50 Hit Points, has two special abilities wrapped up into one attack! By using its Foul Gas (with attached to it), Koffing does 10 damage and either Poisons or Confuses its opponent. If it Poisons, then it does a lot more damage than just 10 per turn (try 30 when your turn comes around again). If Koffing confuses an opposing Pokémon, then your opponent must be very careful—there's a 50/50 chance the confused Pokémon's attack will damage itself instead of Koffing! Be careful against Psychic Pokémon, but definitely include Koffing in any deck that uses Grass. Tastes great with Bulbasaur! —SFC

5. Onix

A Pokémon doesn't have to deal lots of damage to make it a prime contender. Onix really shines as a defensive Pokémon, able to absorb a lot of attacks. With 90 Hit Points, it's one of the beefiest Pokémon out there, larger than many evolved Pokémon. Its first attack, Rock Throw, does 10 damage for . Its second "attack," Harden, is what makes Onix a strong defensive player. For , Harden will stop all damage that doesn't exceed 30. This counters almost all damage from Basic Pokémon! It has a Weakness to Grass but will still stop Grass Pokémon that attack with a base of 10 damage (which totals 20—remember that damage is doubled if the Pokémon has a Weakness to it). Need some time to develop the other Pokémon resting on your Bench? Use Onix to buy yourself a little time! —SFC

Avoid an Energy Crisis

One of the biggest risks you can take when deckbuilding is to cut back too far on Energy. The reason to skimp on Energy is obvious: fewer Energy cards means more room for cool Pokémon and Trainers. But if you cut back too far, you won't draw enough Energy for those Pokémon to use their attacks, and if that happens, even those extra Trainers won't save you.

The most obvious way to compensate for less Energy is to use cheap attacks, but that's rather boring. A better solution is to include an Energy Retrieval or three. You have to discard two cards (Energy Retrieval itself, plus one of your choice) for two Energy, but you usually have at least one card you don't really need (like that fourth Pikachu).

Energy Retrieval also frees up space in your deck. For example, suppose you decide to put 28 Energy (about average) in your deck before adding Energy Retrieval. If you replace one Energy card with a Retrieval, you increase your deck to the equivalent of 29 Energy—more than you decided it needs. So take out another Energy card, replace it with a Pokémon or Trainer, and presto—your deck's gained a cool card. Don't include too many Retrievals, though, because they're useless if you can't draw Energy in the first place!

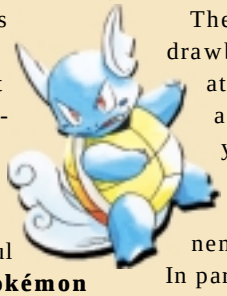
Work the Bench

It's easy to think of the Bench as a place where your Pokémon cool their heels until it's their turn to fight. But there's a lot more to Bench strategy than just replacing an Active Pokémon who's almost Knocked Out or Poisoned with a fresh one. If your Active Pokémon is basically fine but is Poisoned or suffering from some other obnoxious attack, retreat it and bring out another Pokémon. Then retreat the new one, bringing the original back. This refreshes your Pokémon, but you have to pay the cost for both retreats.

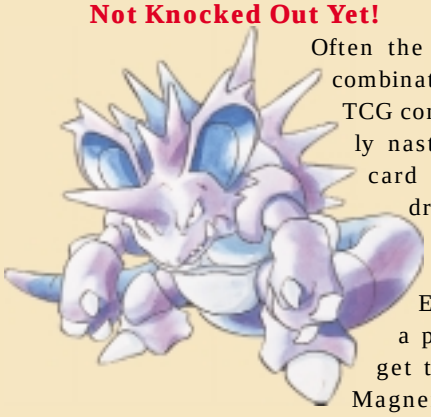
Energy Retrieval can help here, but only slowly, because you still have to reattach that Energy. For retreat gimmicks, you're better off using Switch to retreat a Pokémon for free. Or you can stuff your deck with Pokémon that have retreat costs of 0. These monsters are especially useful before the game, when you and your opponent choose which Pokémon start on the

table. How often have you had more than one Pokémon in your starting hand, only to choose the wrong one for your Active Pokémon? If you choose a 0-retreat Pokémon as your Active one, you can simply yank it back free of charge. Sure, you could use Switch to do the same thing, but that's a pretty lousy time to use it.

An interesting deck tactic is to include a few Pokémon that have lots of Hit Points—they can hold the fort while you spend a few turns building up the Energy of the Pokémon on your Bench. Onix is especially good for this. With its 90 HP and its damage-preventing attack, it can last a *long* time against pretty much any monster that isn't Grass (to which it has a Weakness) or Fire (which has big, cheap attacks compared to other types). Throw in a few Potions, and it can sit out there forever. When you don't need it anymore, just Switch it out!



Not Knocked Out Yet!



Often the most powerful combinations in the **Pokémon** TCG come from a card with a really nasty drawback and another card that gets around that drawback. While these combinations aren't always as useful as Switch or Energy Retrieval, they pack a pretty big bang when you get to use them. Let's look at Magnemite, a Pokémon whose big attack carries a pretty significant drawback, and at how a variety of cards can combine with it to make it a whole lot better.

Magnemite's attack does a *lot* of damage for its Energy requirement: for just you get an attack that does 40 damage to your opponent's Active Pokémon, and 10 damage to every Benched Pokémon. But that includes your Pokémon; plus, Magnemite does another 40 damage to itself. Obviously you need ways to prevent the damage you're doing to your team, or at least ways to get rid of that damage quickly.

Defender is a Trainer card that reduces attack damage dealt to a Pokémon. For Magnemite's purposes, it's important to remember that Defender reduces damage from *all* attacks, including yours. So if you use Defender on Magnemite and attack with it, it only takes 20 damage from its own attack, which often won't be enough to Knock it Out. Best of all, Defender will still be there on your opponent's next turn, preventing 20 damage from that turn's attack! With enough Defenders and Potions, you can keep using the same Magnemite's attack again and again.

A good way to eliminate the damage you're doing to your Bench is to use Pokémon Center. This removes all damage from all of your Pokémon but discards the Energy attached to any that were damaged. If Magnemite gets its attack in early enough, there probably won't be Energy attached to your Benched Pokémon, so you get to ignore the drawback.

There's another hidden drawback to Magnemite's attack: the attack does a lot more damage to your opponent's Active Pokémon than to those on your opponent's Bench. In particular, if your opponent's Active Pokémon is only 10 HP shy of being Knocked Out, you're wasting 30 of the attack's damage, often at the expense of Knocking Out your own Magnemite. You can get around this drawback with Gust of Wind, swapping the almost-KO'd Pokémon for one with, say, 40 HP or fewer. This will enable your Magnemite to Knock Out two of your opponent's Pokémon, not just one.

6. Jynx

Psychic Pokémon typically have fewer Hit Points, but great abilities at later stages of evolution. **Jynx**, however, is very impressive at the basic level. First of all, it's got 70 Hit Points—very beefy, indeed. Its first attack (Doubleslap) is hit-or-miss, doing from 0 to 20 damage by way of coin flips. When it gets up to , however, look out! Using the Meditate attack, Jynx does 20 damage, then an additional 10 for every damage counter on the opposing Pokémon. Now that's some hard-hitting power! With that kind of muscle, Jynx can take down even highly evolved Pokémon (as long as they've taken a little other damage first). Although it's got a bit of a Weakness to its own Psychic kind, look to Jynx if you're running Psychic in your deck and want some beatdown. —SFC

7. Electabuzz

Take a gander at what **Electabuzz** has to offer! This Basic Pokémon doesn't evolve, but then again it really doesn't have to—it has 70 Hit Points. Its first attack, Thundershock, does 10 damage with attached and can Paralyze opposing Pokémon. That's a pretty solid attack: even though it only does 10 damage, the ability to Paralyze your opponent's Pokémon is quite strong. Electabuzz's second attack, Thunderpunch, doesn't play around. For , it deals a base 30 damage. There is also a 50/50 chance (via a coin flip) that it will do an additional 10 damage; if you lose the toss, however, Electabuzz will take the 10 damage instead. Even so, the potential to do 40 damage with is amazing! Watch out for Fighting Pokémon—Electabuzz has a Weakness to them—but every deck that uses Lightning could use a little Electabuzz. —SFC

8. Poliwag

Water Pokémon are an interesting lot—hardly any of them reach 40 Hit Points as Basic Pokémon. **Poliwag** just makes it to 40, and manages to stand out in other ways, too. It has only one attack, but that attack, Water Gun, is solid with a capital *S*. Water Gun does a base 10 damage for , then an additional 10 damage for each additional Water Energy attached (up to a maximum of two, or 30 damage). Poliwag evolves into some extremely cool Pokémon—Poliwhirl, Poliwrath—and added Energy cards come into play when you evolve it. Poliwag has a rough time against Grass Pokémon, but consider Poliwag (and its more evolved forms) when adding Water to your deck. —SFC

POKÈMON LEAGUE NEWS

BY DAVID NOONAN

Want to find new friends to play the Pokémon TCG with? Look no further! The Pokémon League is coming to a store near you.

WHAT'S THE POKÈMON LEAGUE?

The league is a chance for Pokémon players to make friends, play Pokémon, solve Pokémon puzzles and other activities, and trade Pokémon TCG cards.

The League works like the Gyms that Ash, Misty, and Brock visit in the world of Pokémon. The Gyms are places where you can practice Pokémon matches, learn about Pokémon, and make new friends. Many game stores will set aside space for the Pokémon League once a week.

The league is a great way to get better at Pokémon and find new friends in your town to trade and play with.

If you're in the Pokémon League, you'll earn points. As you get more points, you'll earn Trainer badges to show off to your friends—and other great prizes!

HOW CAN I EARN POINTS?

There are lots of ways to get League points, no matter what kind of player you are. You'll earn points for:

- Attending a league event.
- Bringing a new member.
- Completing a league activity.
- Completing a set of **Pokémon** TCG cards.
- Helping the gym leader with league activities.
- Playing a game.
- Winning a game.
- Teaching the game to a new player (must be certified).
- Trading a **Pokémon** TCG card.

Remember, every point you earn helps you get official Trainer badges and other prizes! And you don't have to play every week—you can just do the activities and trade cards if you like.

HOW COMPETITIVE IS IT?

The league is for everyone—new players and old. The league will match you with other players your age.

Many players use Pokémon theme decks (like "Overgrowth," "Power Reserve," or "Zap!") and add their favorite Pokémon. A few invent their own decks!

WHAT OTHER TOURNAMENTS ARE OUT THERE?

Some lucky Pokémon players have already had the chance to earn points in a "test" league. More than 3,000 players meet each week to practice their Pokémon skills at Books-A-Million and other locations. And there are more than 600 official Pokémon tournaments across the country every week!

And in late August, the best Japanese and American players faced off in a Tropical Mega-Battle in Hawaii! Next year the best players in the world will meet in a huge Pokémon tournament.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Just ask the stores that sell Pokémon near you about the Pokémon League or check out www.wizards.com/pokemon.

Poké-natomy

TRAINER ACADEMY

"WELCOME TO POKÉMON ANATOMY 101. IF YOU'LL ALL TAKE YOUR SEATS, WE CAN GET STARTED."

BY MICHAEL MIKAELIAN

FIRST, YOU'LL NOTICE THE EVOLUTION STAGE OF YOUR POKÉMON. There are Basic Pokémon, Stage 1 Pokémon, and Stage 2 Pokémon. Pikachu is a Basic Pokémon. On Stage 1 and Stage 2 cards, this corner says which Pokémon they evolved from.

Use 12 to 16 Basic Pokémon in your deck because you can put them on your Bench right away. Later, those Basic Pokémon can become Stage 1 Pokémon, then Stage 2 Pokémon.

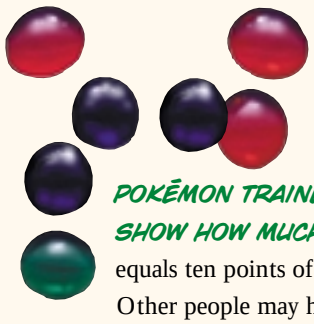
HP IS SHORT FOR HIT POINTS. The higher your Pokémon's HP, the better. There's also an Energy symbol in this corner. This Energy symbol tells you what type of Pokémon it is. Pikachu is a Lightning Pokémon. The other types are Fighting, Fire, Grass, Psychic, and Water.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR ACTIVE POKÉMON TO FIGHT ANYMORE? It can retreat to your Bench if you have another Pokémon to take its place. To do this, discard 1 Energy card attached to your Pokémon for each matching Energy in its Retreat Cost. Pikachu's Retreat Cost is , so discard 1 Energy card of any type to retreat it.

ALL POKÉMON HAVE ATTACKS. The Energy you need to use an attack is on the left. The middle section gives the name of the attack and any special rules for it. The right section shows how much damage the attack does. You want most of your Pokémon to have an attack that only costs 1 Energy to use. Pikachu is an example of a Pokémon with more than one kind of attack. When you attach more Energy (like this Electric Energy card) to these Pokémon, you can use their more powerful attacks.

THIS ENERGY SYMBOL TELLS YOU WHAT TYPE OF POKÉMON TO AVOID. Those Pokémon double their damage when attacking your Pokémon. Some Pokémon have no Weakness. You want to keep Pikachu away from Fighting Pokémon, because their attacks will do double damage to it.

THIS ENERGY SYMBOL TELLS YOU WHICH OTHER POKÉMON HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING THROUGH TO YOUR POKÉMON. If a Pokémon of that Energy type attacks, you subtract the number next to the symbol from the damage it does. Pikachu, like many Pokémon, has no special Resistance.



POKÉMON TRAINERS USUALLY USE GLASS BEADS TO SHOW HOW MUCH DAMAGE A POKÉMON HAS. Each bead equals ten points of damage. This is the easiest way to keep track. Other people may have other ways of doing it.

POKÉMON TRADING POST

BY GLENN ELLIOTT

You bought a few Pokémon TCG cards and you really like the game. Your friends bought a few cards too, but their cards are different! Why do they have different cards? Where can you get cards like theirs?

Pokémon is a trading card game. That means that you'll probably need to trade cards with other people to get the cards you want. No two booster packs are exactly alike, so you never know which cards you're going to get when you buy a pack!

When trading, there are a few things that you need to know in order to make sure that you get a fair trade. Some of these tips are pretty basic, but it doesn't hurt to be reminded of them. Other tips are not as obvious, so knowing them may give you an advantage.

RARITY IS THE KEY TO SMART TRADING

We'll start with the most basic information. There are four different rarities of Pokémon cards. They are called common, uncommon, rare, and hologram. Each Pokémon card has a small symbol in the lower right corner of the card.

- A ● means that the card is a common card.
- A ◆ means that the card is an uncommon card.
- A ★ means that the card is either a rare card or a hologram card. You should be able to tell by looking at the picture whether it's a "holo" card or not. Holo cards shine!

The first rule of trading is to make sure that you get the same rarity of card in return for each card you trade. Maybe your friend wants your Super Potion, which is an uncommon card. Your friend should be willing to give you an uncommon card in exchange.

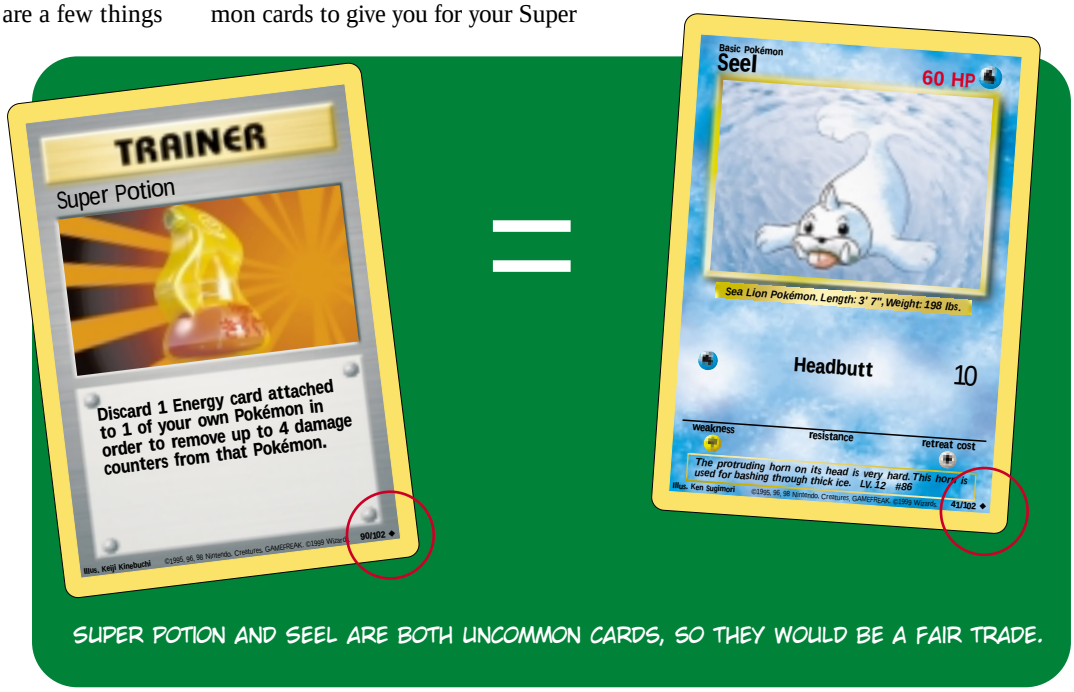
Sometimes you will want to trade cards of different rarities, though. For example, your friend might not have any uncommon cards to give you for your Super Potion. So how many common cards is an uncommon card worth? Without going into the confusing details, here's what you should normally expect.

Each hologram card should normally be worth at least two rare cards. Similarly, each rare card should normally be worth at least two uncommon cards, and each uncommon card should normally be worth at least two common cards. Energy cards aren't usually worth much in a trade because they are so easy to get. Double Colorless Energy is an uncommon card, so it's an exception to the rule.

KNOW THE WORLD OF POKÉMON

Other things can affect the value of a card. For example, Pokémon that are popular on the TV show or in the Nintendo Game Boy game are often worth more than cards that are less popular. Pikachu is a good example. Many people will give you two or three other common cards in exchange for a single Pikachu.

Cards with Pokémon on them tend to be worth more than Trainer cards because you have to have Pokémon to play the game, but you don't need Trainers. Some people also care more about "catching" the cute creatures than the Trainers.



SUPER POTION AND SEEL ARE BOTH UNCOMMON CARDS, SO THEY WOULD BE A FAIR TRADE.

The reason that you want a card will also affect how valuable it is to you. People who just want to collect a complete set of Pokémon cards are more likely to trade one card for one card. If they have an extra copy of a card, it isn't doing them any good. So they are more than happy to trade their extra card for a card they need to finish their set.

However, people who are trading to build a better Pokémon deck are influenced by whether the card you want is one that they need for their deck. Things like the Pokémon's type and Pokémon Power are big concerns for them. You might be able to get an uncommon card from someone for a really good common card like Bill. Or you might be able to get a rare card from someone for a really good uncommon card like Professor Oak.

MOUSE POWER! PIKACHU'S POPULARITY MAKES IT MORE VALUABLE THAN OTHER COMON CARDS. EXPECT TO TRADE SEVERAL COMMON CARDS TO GET THE ELECTRIC MOUSE.

CHECK THE CONDITION

The last thing to keep in mind is that cards in good condition are worth more than cards that are worn, bent, or damaged.

- A card in perfect condition, fresh out of the booster pack, is worth the most. This type of card is said to be in mint condition.
- A card that you've played with once or twice, or a card with a nick or two on the edge, is worth slightly less. Those cards are in near mint condition, because they are nearly as good as mint, but not quite.
- A card that is a little bit warped from shuffling, or a card with several nicks or indentations, is said to be in excellent condition.

PLAYERS AND COLLECTORS

Most collectors aren't interested in cards that are in anything less than excellent condition. For a true collector, cards in mint condition are often worth twice as much as cards that are in excellent condition—even though most people can't tell them apart! But for a player, cards in excellent condition are just as valuable. A player can often get very good trades from a collector by offering his or her mint cards in exchange for the collector's excellent cards. Both sides get what they want!

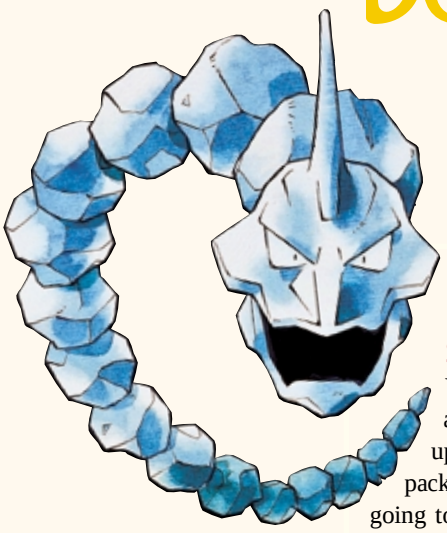
The most important thing to remember about trading Pokémon cards is that *you don't have to trade.* If you aren't happy with the deal you're being offered, just say "No, thanks!" There will always be someone else who wants to trade with you.

A HOLO CARD IS USUALLY WORTH TWO RARE CARDS.

Pokémon Strategy

by Michael Mikaelian

Starting From Scratch, Double Slap and Poison Stinger



Tips on How to Construct Your Winning Pokémon Deck

Suffering from Pokémania?

You've got your starter deck. You've picked up all four preconstructed decks. You even saved up your allowance and bought a few booster packs. Now you're asking yourself, "What am I going to do with all these cards?" That's easy—build your own Pokémon decks! The Pokémon rulebook has some guidelines and suggestions for building your own deck, but those will just be the tip of the iceberg.

Sneaky Underhanded Tricks

So: what's the easiest way to knock out six of your opponent's Pokémon before he or she can knock out six of yours? You can use tough Pokémon that are hard to KO or Pokémon with fierce attacks that deal a lot of damage. Another option is to use Pokémon with special abilities. Sleep, confusion, and paralysis can be more powerful than plain old damage. They make it harder—or impossible—for an opponent's Pokémon to attack and retreat. If your opponent can't attack, how can he or she win?

While most attacks cause damage just once, poison attacks keep dealing damage, even after your Pokémon is KO'd. Against smaller Pokémon, poison can be devastating. Attacks that can poison usually deal 10 to 20 damage in addition to giving the defending Pokémon a "poison counter." Then, at the end of each turn, the poisoned Pokémon takes another 10 damage. If your opponent wants to get rid of the poison counter, he or she has to retreat. If you can prevent the retreat, the poison will eventually knock the Pokémon out.

When combined with poison, sleep, confusion and paralysis are more than an annoyance for your opponents. Now they have a poisoned Pokémon that may not be able to retreat or attack! If their Pokémon can't recover, it will be KO'd. To make matters worse, Energy Removal makes it harder for your opponent's Pokémon to attack and retreat. While your opponent is struggling to keep his or her Pokémon from being KO'd, you can afford to retreat your active Pokémon and attack with your best Pokémon from the bench.

Those Who Can't, Teach

Choosing your Trainers is just as important as choosing your Pokémon. Many of them are good, but some are better than others. Though most decks contain defensive cards like Potion, Super Potion, and Defender, cards which increase damage to opposing Pokémon can be just as effective. If the defending Pokémon has a weakness against your Pokémon, Plus Power does 20 damage to it instead of 10. Many times, Energy Removal causes your opponent to be unable to attack, which can be as good as an extra turn.

Many Trainer cards give you more control over the game. Computer Search and Pokémon Trader are two such cards that allow you to find the exact card you're looking for. Professor Oak is a powerful Trainer, allowing you to discard your hand and draw a new hand of seven cards. Though this gives you a lot of options, be careful—multiple Professor Oaks could cause you to draw your entire deck and lose the game.

Here are four Pokémon decks for you to try, each one working off of a different theme. Try them out, then work on your own combinations. Don't be afraid to be imaginative! ■

Michael Mikaelian admits that most Pokémon taste like chicken, especially Pidgey.

Maintaining Control Of The Game

Though its possible to build a strong offensive or defensive Pokémon deck, sometimes it pays to try more sneaky methods of winning. Using poison, paralysis, sleep, and confusion can draw out a game, because your Pokémon don't deal all that much damage at once. The most important thing is to keep your opponent off-balance, preventing them from effectively using their own strategy against you. Before they know it, their Pokémon stable will be full of sleepy, confused, and sick Pokémon, unable to fight effectively.

Dazed and Confused

Basic Pokémon (17)
- 2 Bulbasaur
- 4 Ghastly
- 3 Jynx
- 2 Koffing
- 2 Porygon
- 4 Weedle

Stage 1 Pokémon (5)
- 2 Haunter
- 1 Ivysaur
- 2 Kakuna

Stage 2 Pokémon (1)
- 1 Beedrill

Trainers (9)
- 1 Computer Search
- 3 Energy Removal
- 3 Plus Power
- 1 Pokémon Trader
- 1 Professor Oak

Energy (28)
- 16 Energy
- 12 Energy

Building A Better Machamp

Put those Machamps from your Pokémon Starter Decks to good use! This deck is all about evolving Machop all the way to Machamp and actually keeping him conscious. Because of all the energy required for Machop, Machoke and Machamp's attacks, this deck contains only and Pokémon. Onix, Sandshrew, and Rattata are all defensive Pokémon. Use them to soak up damage while evolving Machamp on your bench, or have the Pokémon Trader exchange them for any other Pokémon from your deck. When Machamp comes out swinging, your opponent won't know what to do!

Basic Pokémon (16)
- 4 Machop
- 4 Onix
- 4 Rattata
- 4 Sandshrew

Stage 1 Pokémon (6)
- 4 Machoke
- 2 Raticate

Stage 2 Pokémon (2)
- 2 Machamp

Trainers (12)
- 2 Bill
- 1 Computer Search
- 3 Defender
- 2 Gust of Wind
- 1 Pokémon Trader
- 1 Professor Oak
- 2 Switch

Energy (24)
- 24 Energy

Triple Feature

Ready for a great trick? A three-energy Pokémon deck! Normally, using three different types of Pokémon makes it difficult to match the right energy with the right Pokémon. This deck, though, has many Pokémon with attacks, allowing them to use any type of energy. There are also attacks that use , , and energy, but not as many. There are three Energy Retrievals to make sure you always have enough energy. If you're looking for a Pokémon to match the energy cards you have in your hand, Pokémon Trader swaps one from your hand for one in your deck. The best advantage you'll have is variety—with three different kinds of Pokémon you'll have great odds of exploiting opposing Pokémon weaknesses!

Basic Pokémon (20)
- 4 Charmander
- 3 Doduo
- 3 Drowzee
- 2 Growlith
- 4 Magnemite
- 4 Pikachu

Stage 1 Pokémon (3)
- 1 Charmeleon
- 1 Electrabuzz
- 1 Raichu

Trainers (9)
- 2 Defender
- 3 Energy Retreival
- 1 Pokémon Trader
- 1 Potion
- 1 Professor Oak
- 1 Super Potion

Energy (28)
- 8 Energy
- 12 Energy
- 8 Energy

Pokémon Mono-Blue

Of all the energy types that work well by themselves, is definitely one of the best. Pokémon like Poliwag, Poliwrath, and Blastoise have "pumpable" attacks, which deal extra damage for each extra energy attached to them. also has some really tough Pokémon. Most Pokémon have about 40 HP. Though Magicarp only has 30 HP, Seel has 60 HP. As you evolve them, they get even better. Although Magicarp is only a puny 30 HP, when you evolve him into Gyrados he jumps up to 100 HP! One disadvantage of playing a single energy type is your Weakness. In this case, most of your Pokémon have a Weakness to . Of course, if your opponent's playing Pokémon, you have nothing to worry about, but they're in big trouble!

Basic Pokémon (16)
- 2 Magicarp
- 4 Poliwag
- 4 Seel
- 4 Squirtle
- 2 Staryu

Stage 1 Pokémon (8)
- 2 Dewgong
- 1 Gyrados
- 2 Poliwhirl
- 1 Starmie
- 2 Wartortle

Stage 2 Pokémon (2)
- 1 Blastoise
- 1 Poliwhirl

Trainers (10)
- 2 Bill
- 2 Gust of Wind
- 2 Pokedex
- 2 Potion
- 1 Professor Oak
- 1 Super Potion

Energy (24)
- 24 Energy

Pokémon Strategy

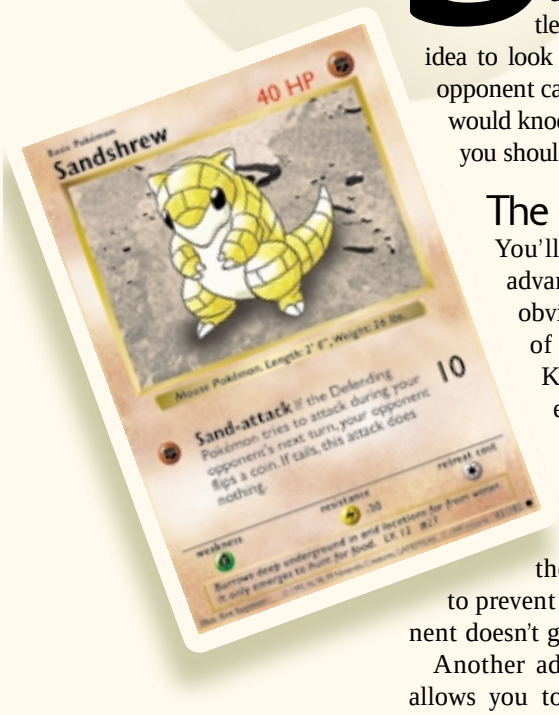
by Robert Gutschera

A Place in France Where the Pokémon Dance

The Strategy Behind Running Away

When a newcomer starts playing the Pokémon trading card game, they usually pay attention to their Pokémon's Hit Points, attack costs and damage, maybe even Weakness and Resistance. Often, beginners don't think much about Retreat Cost—but sending your Pokémon in and out of battle is an important part of playing the game well. Pokémon with a low Retreat Cost can be a big help when you're dancing that Pokémon dance.

Beginners tend to just attack with their Pokémon every turn and don't think too far ahead. But a little experience shows it's often a good idea to look first at the strongest attack your opponent can manage next turn. If that attack would knock out your Active Pokémon, then you should consider retreating.



The Better Part of Valor

You'll actually find a number of advantages to retreating. The most obvious is that you will prevent one of your Pokémon from being Knocked Out. Remember that even if you have plenty of Pokémon on the Bench and your opponent is nowhere close to Knocking Out six of your Pokémon and winning the game, it can still be good idea to prevent a Knock Out just so your opponent doesn't get to draw a Prize card.

Another advantage to retreating is that it allows you to pick a different Pokémon as your Active Pokémon. Maybe one of the Pokémon on your Bench has a better attack than your current Active Pokémon, or maybe it has a better Weakness or Resistance. If it's easy for you to get your Active Pokémon out of the fight, it will be more likely that you can always put the right Pokémon into any battle.

Retreating can also heal your Pokémon from effects like Confusion or Poison. Remember that the rules say that "Sleep, Confusion, Paralysis, Poison, or anything else that might be the result of an attack some Pokémon made earlier" all go away if Pokémon goes to the Bench. This means that even a really nasty effect like the results of Sandshrew's Sand-attack (which forces your Pokémon to flip a coin, on tails your Pokémon's attack fails) can be removed by sending the affected monster to the Bench. The easier it is for you to get your Pokémon to the Bench, the less you will suffer from attacks like these.

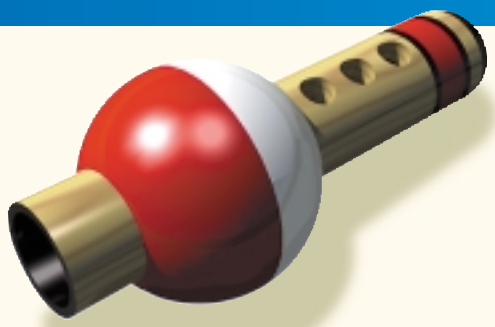
How do you get your Pokémon back on the bench?

Hit the Bench

How do you get your Pokémon back on the Bench? Sometimes your best bet is simply to play a card. Switch, of course, will take any Pokémon and replace it with a Pokémon from your Bench. Scoop Up will do the same thing—once you've scooped up your Active Pokémon, you simply replace it with one from your Bench. Then you can replay the just-scooped Pokémon to your Bench, which means that Pokémon is healed. Even if you don't have any Trainer cards in your hand, however, remember that you can always retreat by paying the Retreat Cost directly.

To make use of all this baiting and switching in a practical manner, you'll want Pokémon with a low retreat Cost—either 1 or 0. Pokémon that cost nothing to retreat are espe-

Robert Gutschera owns a thousand acres of prime Pokémon grazing range that extends across three states. It's his fervent hope that this ranch will eventually secede from the Union and become the sovereign state of "Pokémonia."



cially useful. If you have one in your opening hand, play it as your starting Pokémon. When your turn comes around, put the Pokémon you really want to use on your Bench, and retreat your Active Pokémon for free, replacing it with the Benched Pokémon. In effect, you've played your Active Pokémon after seeing what Active Pokémon your opponent has chosen, which can be a big advantage. You can do this trick later in the game as well; whenever your Active Pokémon is Knocked Out, replace it with a zero Retreat-Cost Pokémon from your Bench. When your turn starts, you can draw a card, play any other cards you might want to play, and only then decide which Pokémon to use.

If you have two Pokémon with zero Retreat Costs, it's nearly impossible for your opponent to keep you Poisoned or Confused for very long. Simply retreat your Active Pokémon, bringing in the other Pokémon that has a zero Retreat Cost. Then retreat that Pokémon, bringing your old Active Pokémon back in. You've cured your Active Pokémon at no cost to yourself.

There are a number of good Pokémon with zero Retreat Cost. Two particularly interesting ones are Rattata and Doduo. Because these Pokémon are Colorless, they can be put into any deck. Rattata has a better attack (and can evolve as well), but Rattata is vulnerable to Fighting and has only 30 HP, so he can fall to a single blow from Machop or Hitmonchan. Doduo has 50 HP and a Resistance to Fighting (but a Weakness to Lightning), so in many cases he will be a better choice.

It Takes Two to Tangela

Suppose you manage to build a deck that swaps your Pokémon in and out with lightning efficiency. Your opponents can't defeat you, because they can't Knock Out your Pokémon; whenever one is damaged, it retreats and another Pokémon takes its place. Eventually, though, your opponents (at least, those who have been paying attention) will start building similar decks. How can you answer them?

There are a number of strategies you can use to defeat an opponent who switches Pokémon around a lot. One simple technique is to just inflict a lot of damage all at once. If you have a Pokémon with an attack that does 50 or more damage, many Pokémon (and almost all of the ones that have a zero Retreat Cost) will be Knocked Out immediately, so they won't get a chance to retreat.

> Knowing **when** and **how** to retreat is **key** to being a good Pokémon player.

Another possibility is to use Pokémon like Magnemite that can do damage to Pokémon on the Bench. Probably the best way to deal with this problem is to use Gust of Wind. Usually you just want to "gust out" the Pokémon that's recently retreated and Knock Out that Pokémon. But sometimes you want to pick the Pokémon on your opponent's Bench that has the highest Retreat Cost and gust that one out. If that Pokémon doesn't have any Energy attached, it may sit helpless for several turns while you attack it.

The Pocket Monster Mash

Even though some strategies may exist for defeating Pokémon trainers who do nothing but switch their Pokémon all over the place, knowing when and how to retreat is key to being a good Pokémon player. Whether you decide to include just one or two Pokémon with a zero Retreat Cost to give your deck flexibility or you include a huge swarm of low Retreat-Cost Pokémon along with plenty of Gusts and Switches to gain total control of both sides' Active Pokémon, running away can pay off big! ■

POKÉMON

A good Pokémon trainer must do more than just choose the right Pokémon and prepare them for battle. To be a master trainer, you must care for your Pokémon and learn all you can about the Pokémon you will face.

LITTLE HITTERS DECK

This deck is built around speed. All the Pokémon can do something with only one Energy card attached. Plus the deck only uses one Energy type, so you never have the wrong Energy in hand. Hit your opponent's Pokémon early with Machop, Rattata, or Hitmonchan. Then use Potions and Pokémon Centers to keep your little hitters healthy.

Pokémon (20)
4 Hitmonchan
4 Kangaskhan
4 Machop
4 Rattata
4 Rhyhorn

Trainers (18)
4 Bill
4 Energy Removal
2 Gust of Wind
2 Pokémon Center
4 Potion
2 Professor Oak

Energy (22)
18 Fighting Energy
4 Double Colorless Energy

POKÉMON CENTER

As all trainers should know, the Pokémon Center is where you take hurt or sick Pokémon. The Center will heal your Pokémon's wounds and cure them when they get sick. If you play Nintendo's Pokémon Game Boy game, I'm sure you have spent a lot of time in Pokémon Centers. They are the best way to keep your Pokémon in fighting trim.

There are differences between the Pokémon Center in the Game Boy game and the one in the Pokémon trading card game. The Game Boy Center will heal your Pokémon's Hit Points and cure ailments (Poison, Confusion, Burn, and so on). But you can't run to the Pokémon Center during a gym battle and then return to finish defeating that gym master.

The Pokémon Center Trainer card in the Pokémon TCG doesn't cure your Pokémon of Poison or Confusion. But you *can* use it in the middle of a battle. So you can heal your Active Pokémon and all your Benched Pokémon with just one card. This can be great against an opponent who can't heal his or her Pokémon fast enough.

There is a big drawback to using the Pokémon Center card. You have to discard all the Energy cards attached to all your Pokémon when you use it. To get around this problem, use Pokémon that only need 1 or 2 Energy cards to attack. You won't lose as many Energy cards because you didn't attach many in the first place. Plus, if you have at least 1 Energy card in your hand, you can begin attacking again right away.

For example, the "Little Hitters" deck featured on this page uses 12 Pokémon that can attack for 20 damage with only 1 Energy card attached to them. Let's say I have an Active Machop with 3 damage counters on it. I also have a Hitmonchan with 4 damage counters, a Rattata with 2 damage counters, and another Machop with 2 damage counters on my Bench.

If I play Pokémon Center before I attack, I will remove 11 damage counters and only 3 Energy cards (at most). I would have already removed Energy cards from the Benched Machop and Hitmonchan when they retreated. I can then attach a new Energy card to Machop and begin attacking for 20 damage again.

PROFILES

BY WILL McDERMOTT

PROFESSOR OAK

Good old Professor Oak. In the *Pokémon* TV show, the Professor sends young Ash on his journey with a feisty Pikachu and a Pokédex. In the Game Boy game, Professor Oak doesn't just give you your first Pokémon and a Pokédex. He helps you throughout the game with information and hidden machines.

In the Pokémon trading card game, the Professor Oak card gives you hidden information in the form of cards. When you play Professor Oak, you have to discard all the cards in your hand. That's the bad news. The good news is that you get to draw 7 new cards. This is very powerful because having more cards in your hand gives you more choices in the game.

Of course, you don't want to play Professor Oak too often or at the wrong time. If you play too many Professor Oak cards, you could run out of cards and lose the game. So you'll only want 2 Professor Oaks in most decks. The best time to play a Professor Oak card is when it's the last card in your hand. Then you don't have to discard any cards, *and* you still get to draw 7 cards!

You can still use Professor Oak if you have cards in your hand. But make sure you don't care if you lose those cards. For example, use Professor Oak when you need more Energy cards and have a lot of Pokémon on your Bench. Play as many Trainer cards and Pokémon as you can first, though. You never know when you might need those cards. If you have a full Bench and only Pokémon cards in your hand, you won't really lose anything important when you play Professor Oak.

If you might lose some cards you want to keep, you can use cards like Maintenance to put them back in your deck before you play Professor Oak. That's how Mike Mikaelian's "Oak Maintenance " deck works. With 4 Professor Oaks, 4 Bills, and 2 Maintenance cards, you should always have the right card in your hand. And if you have the right cards, your opponent's Pokémon will be easy pickings.

OAK MAINTENANCE DECK

With this deck, you want to get Blastoise into play as fast as possible. Use Bill and Professor Oak to draw cards quickly. Play as many Water Energy cards as you can and then play more Professor Oak cards. If you have a card you want to keep, use Maintenance to shuffle it and another card back into your deck first. Then you can safely play Professor Oak.

Pokémon (18)
3 Blastoise
4 Seel
4 Squirtle
4 Staryu
3 Wartortle

Trainer (18)
4 Bill
4 Energy Removal
2 Maintenance
2 Pokémon Breeder
2 Pokémon Trader
4 Professor Oak

Energy (24)
24 Water Energy

CREDITS

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